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240812Z Sep 02

2002HOCHI00966 - UNCLASSIFIED

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00
	DS-00	EB-00	FBIE-00	UTED-00	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-00	JUSE-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	IRM-00	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00
	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00
	SAS-00	/008W					

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FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6824
INFO AMEMBASSY HANOI
ASEAN COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HO CHI MINH CITY 000966

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [VM](#) [HUMANR](#)

SUBJECT: POLICE QUESTION DR. NGUYEN DAN QUE

1. (SBU) BEGIN SUMMARY: HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST DR. NGUYEN DAN QUE VERBALLY SPARRED WITH POLICE AND OTHER SECURITY PERSONNEL FOR FOUR HOURS ON SEPTEMBER 20, WHEN THEY
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APPEARED AT HIS HOME IN AN ATTEMPT TO BRING HIM TO THE LOCAL POLICE STATION FOR QUESTIONING. NOT KNOWING THE REASONS FOR THIS UNEXPECTED VISIT, QUE REFUSED TO ACCOMPANY THE POLICE WITHOUT A PROPER LEGAL SUMMONS. POLOFF VISITED QUE THE DAY AFTER THE INCIDENT AND FOUND HIM FEISTY, HEALTHY AND DETERMINED TO CONTINUE TO CHAMPION HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN VIETNAM. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) DR. QUE'S BROTHER IN THE U.S. CALLED CONGEN HCMC ON SEPTEMBER 20, SHORTLY AFTER THE INCIDENT HAD TAKEN PLACE. ACCORDING TO THE BROTHER, QUE HAD PHONED HIM AND HAD JUST BEGUN TO DESCRIBE THE POLICE STANDOFF WHEN THE CALL WAS CUT OFF. FEARING FOR QUE'S SAFETY, THE BROTHER ASKED FOR ASSISTANCE. CONGEN THEN MADE SOME INQUIRIES AND AGREED WITH THE BROTHER THAT BOTH WOULD KEEP IN CONTACT AND CONTINUE TO CALL THE LAST KNOWN CELL PHONE NUMBER FOR DR. QUE. (POST NOTE: LOCAL SECURITY AUTHORITIES REGULARLY SHOW THEIR IRRITATION WITH QUE BY DISCONNECTING HIS HOME PHONE AND CELL PHONE.) EARLY SEPTEMBER 21, HAVING MANAGED TO REESTABLISH CONTACT AND GAIN A CLEARER PICTURE OF THE SITUATION, THE BROTHER CONVEYED QUE'S INVITATION TO THE CONSULATE GENERAL TO VISIT HIM AT HOME TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION.

3. (SBU) CONGEN POLOFF VISITED DR. QUE ON THE AFTERNOON OF SEPTEMBER 21. HE SEEMED UNFAZED BY THIS LATEST BRUSH WITH THE STATE SECURITY APPARATUS AND APPEARED TO BE IN GOOD HEALTH. HE SPOKE OPENLY AND ANIMATEDLY. WHILE THERE WERE NO UNIFORMED POLICE NEAR THE RESIDENCE, THE EXISTENCE OF CONSTRUCTION CREWS WORKING NEXT DOOR MADE IT DIFFICULT TO TELL IF THE PROPERTY WAS UNDER SURVEILLANCE. POLOFF
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ENCOUNTERED NO OBSTACLES TO HIS ONE-BLOCK WALK DOWN THE SIDESTREET ON WHICH DR. QUE LIVES.

4. (SBU) DESCRIBING EVENTS WITH HIS USUAL BRAVADO, DR. QUE SAID THAT 20-30 POLICE AND SECURITY OFFICERS CAME TO HIS HOME ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 AT 0800 AND STAYED UNTIL NOON. SEVERAL OFFICERS WORE LOCAL POLICE UNIFORMS, BUT MANY MORE WERE DRESSED IN STREET CLOTHES. TWO MARKED POLICE CARS BLOCKED THE ALLEYWAY ON BOTH SIDES OF QUE'S DOORWAY. A MAN WHO IDENTIFIED HIMSELF AS NGUYEN VAN DUNG, DEPUTY CHIEF OF POLITICAL SECURITY, LED THE OPERATION AND DID MOST OF THE TALKING FOR THE NEXT FOUR HOURS. UPON ARRIVAL, DUNG FLASHED AN OFFICIAL LOOKING DOCUMENT AND DEMANDED THAT QUE ACCOMPANY HIM TO THE POLICE STATION. CITING ILL HEALTH AND THE LACK OF A VALID LEGAL DOCUMENT ALLEGING SPECIFIC VIOLATIONS OF VIETNAMESE LAW, QUE REFUSED.

15. (SBU) DEPUTY CHIEF DUNG ACCUSED DR. QUE OF AUTHORIZING PRINT AND INTERNET ARTICLES CRITICAL OF GVN POLICIES. ACCORDING TO QUE, DUNG THREATENED TO USE "STRONG MEASURES," TO INDUCE QUE TO SUBMIT TO QUESTIONING. QUE FREELY ADMITTED THE TEXTS WERE HIS (SOME WERE SEVERAL YEARS OLD) AND INVITED POLICE TO CONDUCT A SEARCH. HE NOTED THAT HIS OPINIONS WERE ALREADY A MATTER OF PUBLIC RECORD AND HE HAD NOTHING TO HIDE. HE INSISTED THAT HE WOULD GO TO THE POLICE STATION ONLY IF FORCED TO DO SO. AFTER ATTEMPTING TO PRESSURE QUE'S WIFE AND TWO ADULT SONS TO CONVINCE HIM TO GIVE IN, DEPUTY CHIEF DUNG AND COMPANY FINALLY DEPARTED, LEAVING SEVERAL OFFICERS BEHIND. AS HE LEFT, DUNG PROMISED TO RETURN SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE WITH HIS BOSS, CHIEF THAI VAN TAM, AND A COURT ORDER.

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16. (SBU) DR. QUE REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED THAT HE HAD NO IDEA WHAT MIGHT HAVE TRIGGERED THIS SUDDEN BURST OF INTEREST FROM THE AUTHORITIES. ONE POSSIBILITY HE MENTIONED, HOWEVER, WAS THE FACT THAT HE HAD BEEN EXPECTING A VISIT FROM PHIL FISHMAN AND TIM RYAN OF THE AFL-CIO. BUT THEY HAD NOT ACTUALLY MADE CONTACT WITH ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE QUE'S PHONE SERVICE HAD BEEN INTERMITTENTLY CUT OFF. AS POLOFF WAS LEAVING, QUE SAID THAT HE HAD RECENTLY RECEIVED A LAPTOP COMPUTER FROM THE U.S. NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ASKED IF THE CONSULATE GENERAL COULD ASSIST HIM IN CONNECTING TO THE INTERNET. HE SAID THAT THE AUTHORITIES WERE AWARE THAT HE HAD THE COMPUTER, BUT WOULD NOT PERMIT HIM TO REGISTER FOR AN INTERNET ACCOUNT.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN AT LEAST A YEAR THAT DR. QUE (OR A RELATIVE) HAS SPECIFICALLY ASKED FOR CONGEN ASSISTANCE. OUR SURPRISE WAS MATCHED BY THAT OF THE EXTERNAL RELATIONS OFFICE (LOCAL BRANCH OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IN HCMC), WHO HAD HEARD OF NO NEW REASON FOR QUE TO ATTRACT SUCH POLICE ATTENTION. QUE HAS RECEIVED CONGENOFFS AND OTHER AMERICAN VISITORS FAIRLY REGULARLY. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE PHONE SERVICE CUTOFFS, HE HAS NOT COMPLAINED TO US OF SPECIFIC POLICE HARASSMENT.

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R 240812Z SEP 02
FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6825
INFO AMEMBASSY HANOI
ASEAN COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 HO CHI MINH CITY 000966

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